

Having thus described the preferred embodiments, the invention is now claimed to be:

5 *Sub 9a*

1. ~~A method of finish processing a set of output media, comprising:~~  
receiving a first finishing instruction corresponding to a first finishing operation associated with the set of output media; and,  
based on a determination to process the set of output media by other than the first finishing operation, substituting a second finishing instruction corresponding to a second finishing operation for the first finishing instruction.

2. The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising applying the second finishing operation to the set of output media.

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3. The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising:  
determining unavailability of the first finishing operation; and,  
selecting a substitute finishing instruction associated with an available finishing operation.

*Sub 9a*

4. ~~The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second finishing operation is selected from a collating process, a registration process, a binding process, a cutting process, a hole forming process, and an abstract finishing process.~~

5. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein the applying step comprises placing a slipsheet relative to the set of output media indicative of where a finishing operation is to be performed.

*Sub 9a*

6. ~~The method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the applying step further comprises marking the slipsheet with information including the first finishing instruction.~~

~~7. The method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the applying step~~  
further comprises marking the slipsheet with a human-readable description of the first finishing instruction.

8. The method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the applying step further comprises marking the slipsheet with a machine-readable description of the first finishing instruction.

9. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein the applying step comprises marking the set of output media with information including the first finishing instruction.

10. A method of processing a print job using abstract finishing comprising:  
receiving the print job including desired finishing instructions;  
generating a marker representing at least one of the desired finishing  
instructions; and,  
placing the marker at a selected location relative to the print job.

11. The method as set forth in claim 10, wherein the generating step comprises:  
converting the desired finishing instruction into a human-readable description of the desired finishing instruction; and,  
marking the human-readable description of the desired finishing instruction on a slipsheet.

12. The method as set forth in claim 10, wherein the generating step comprises:  
converting the desired instruction into a machine-readable description of the desired finishing instruction; and,

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~~marking the machine-readable description of the desired finishing instruction on a slipsheet.~~

13. The method as set forth in claim 10, wherein individual output media comprise a printed area and a border area, and the placing step comprises placing the marker on the border area of individual output media.

14. The method as set forth in claim 10, wherein individual output media comprise an area for job content, and the placing step comprises placing the marker on the area for job content.

15. The method as set forth in claim 10, wherein the desired finishing instruction includes inserting additional media at a selected location relative to the print job, and the placing step comprises inserting the marker as a placeholder for the additional media.

16. The method as set forth in claim 10, wherein the placing step comprises inserting a marker at compilation boundaries within the print job.

17. A printing system comprising:  
a user interface for supplying the printing system with data including a desired finishing instruction;  
a finishing element which applies a finishing operation to a print job; and  
a processor in communication with the user interface and the finishing element, said processor determining compatibility between the finishing element and the desired finishing instruction, and upon determining incompatibility, selecting a compatible finishing instruction for the finishing element.

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18. The printing system as set forth in claim 17, wherein the processor substitutes the selected compatible finishing instruction for the desired finishing instruction.

~~19. The printing system as set forth in claim 17, wherein the processor determines user preference regarding the selected compatible finishing instruction.~~

20. The printing system as set forth in claim 17, wherein the finishing operation applied by the finishing element is selected from a collating process, a registration process, a binding process, a cutting process, a hole forming process, and an abstract finishing process.

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